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<b>Author</b>	Alistair Robinson
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## **“Jo the outlaw with the broom”: The Public and Pestiferous Role of the Vagrant in Charles Dickens’s *Bleak House***

**Alistair Robinson**

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*This article explores Charles Dickens’s unusual characterisation of vagrant figures in his novel Bleak House. Dickens conceived of the vagrant as a public entity without any recourse to private spaces — a thesis supported here by the novel and a series of satellite texts by Dickens, Henry Mayhew and Edwin Chadwick. This conception, in turn, is both a reflection, and a perceived cause, of the vagrant’s intellectual, moral and physical degeneration. Beginning with a brief overview of vagrancy in the nineteenth century, before moving on to a discussion about Dickens’s atypical depiction of vagrant characters, this paper examines both the public presentation of vagrants and the dangers that they were perceived to pose to society at large. In doing this, this article seeks to unpick how one of the great Victorian social critics perceived the problem of nineteenth-century vagrancy and its social ramifications.*

Luke Fildes’s 1874 painting *Applicants for Admission to a Casual Ward* presents the viewer with a gallery of vagrant characters. From right to left we see: a crippled soldier, a huddled family, a slumped drunk, a downcast wretch, a stooped woman and an old man, collapsed on the cobblestones. In the foreground of the picture is a young woman, nursing a bundle obscured by rags, and a little girl, who walks haltingly by her side. It is unclear whether they are making their way to the back of the casual line, which stretches beyond the frame, or simply heading down the street. Instinctively, we hope they’ll pass on by.

The miserable sight that Fildes depicts was common throughout the Victorian period. Vagrants spent long periods of time publically queuing outside the casual wards, waiting for the possibility of a single night’s lodging. Those that were not received by the unions often spent a night in the cold, huddled against the workhouse wall. Charles Dickens relates such a case in his article “A Nightly Scene in London” from 1856, in which he espies five women lying on the pavement. Recalling the mud and mire of Whitechapel on a drab November evening, he describes them as follows: “Five great beehives, covered with rags – five dead bodies taken out of graves, tied neck and heels, and covered with rags – would have looked like those five bundles upon which the rain rained down in the public street” (347). There is something appalling about this macabre description, but there is also something intriguing and absurd. The metaphor of the vagrants as “great beehives” lying in the street seems so incongruous with the scene that it grants them a bizarre quality that piques the reader’s curiosity. Likewise, the meticulous description of the women “tied neck and heels” draws us close to the “dead bodies,” stimulating our interest even as we are repelled. Dickens, then, makes the Whitechapel women into a kind of grotesque spectacle in which the reader becomes unwillingly

involved. With his detailed and provoking metaphors Dickens illustrates the way in which Victorian vagrants, like those queuing outside Fildes's casual ward, were exceedingly public — indeed, public to the point that they were almost an exhibit.<sup>1</sup>

This article explores the portrayal of the vagrant as a solely public entity in Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* (1852-53). Primarily, it focuses on the crossing-sweeper Jo. Through him it seeks to explicate the following questions: how and why is Jo presented as an overtly public character? What are the consequences of this for Jo and the rest of the novel as a whole? What social critique does Dickens make through this depiction? First, however, as a prelude to this investigation, it is important to address a definitional question: what do we mean by the term vagrant?

The problem of finding a satisfying definition is twofold. First, the use of the term changed across the course of the Victorian period. As Lorie Charlesworth comments, the word vagrant originally denoted somebody who had committed a vagrancy offence. During the 1840s, however, it lost its specific, legal sense and came to denominate all those who belonged to the casual poor (169-71). Consequently, a "significant section of the poor" acquired "quasi-criminal status" (Charlesworth 175). Second, another difficulty in defining the term lies in the nature of vagrancy itself. Vagrants were (and are) difficult to track and difficult to collect data on. This is in part because they were always moving, and in part because they had recourse to several different types of accommodation. Indeed, although Henry Mayhew depicted the union casual wards as "gratuitous hotels" (3: 368) that vagrants exploited, many, in fact, would have sought shelter in common lodging houses (Humphreys 94), like the Two-Penny Travellers in Dickens's *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870). Moreover, even if a vagrant had no money, he or she might well end up in one of the charitable refuges that sprang up during the winter months. As a result, the actual number of vagrants, as well as who fell into this category, was hard to determine throughout the Victorian period. This can be seen, at a glance, by the wildly disparate estimations of Henry Mayhew and William Booth: the former guessed that there were 40,000 vagrants in the United Kingdom (3: 377), the latter 1,715,500 (22). Consequently, as the historian M. A. Crowther concludes, "vagrants were not amenable to social classification" (98). If we are unable to determine the number (let alone the type) of people who made up the vagrant population in Victorian Britain, and the old, legalistic meaning of the word had disappeared, where does this leave our definition?

The first entry of the *Oxford English Dictionary Online* defines "vagrant" as follows:

"One of a class of persons who having no settled home or regular work wander from place to place, and maintain themselves by begging or in some other disreputable or dishonest way; an itinerant beggar, idle loafer, or tramp." Unfortunately this entry, which has not been updated since the first edition of the *OED* in 1916, simply reverts to the legal definition of the term vagrant by capturing a sense of the Elizabethan "sturdy beggar." This beggar is, like the *OED*'s vagrant, an "idle" person who goes "about in any country either begging or using any subtle craft" to gain subsistence (*The Statutes* 568). Although anachronistic in light of the term's expansion and obscuration across the Victorian

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<sup>1</sup> Dickens's fascination with the poverty stricken and the macabre is well documented. In *The Life of Charles Dickens* John Forster notes that from an early age Dickens felt an "attraction of repulsion" (19) to the slum of St. Giles.

period, the *OED*'s reversion is hardly surprising. After all, this dictionary was largely an exercise in "nineteenth-century methods of empirical scientific investigation" (Brewer 113) that used canonical sources (whether legal, literary or theological) to authorise and encapsulate its definitions (120).

The want of an authoritative definition complicates the use of the word *vagrant* as a category of person. Nevertheless, it also licences the use of a broad, flexible definition for the purposes of this discussion. Within this article the word *vagrant* will be taken to mean a destitute individual who has been wandering for a significant period of time. This definition has been chosen for the following reasons: the word etymologically stems from *vagārī*, the Latin for "to wander"; destitution is explicitly or implicitly present in each definition discussed above (the vagrancy laws by which one could be prosecuted contain measures for the suppression of begging); and the significant period of time takes into account that the state of vagrancy is not necessarily continuous.

It is important to establish a definition early on in our discussion because at first glance Jo might not be considered a vagrant. He has a job, of sorts, sweeping a crossing in Cook's Court, and he has a home in the ramshackle slum Tom-All-Alone's. Similarly, the brick-makers, also discussed as vagrants in the following, have an occupation and live in a series of huts and hovels. However, Jo is utterly destitute, scraping together a scanty living by virtue of his existence rather than his assumed public service; he receives donations from Nemo and Snagsby not because he is sweeping a crossing but because he is poor. The circumstances in which we find Jo mirror those that Mayhew details in *London Labour and the London Poor* (1861-62): "crossing-sweeping seems to be one of those occupations which are resorted to as an excuse for begging" (2: 465) and is a way of life that has the benefit of "exciting the sympathy of the neighbouring householders" (2: 465); this results in "small weekly allowances or 'pensions'" (2: 465). Moreover, Jo is constantly forced to move on by the police, as he says himself, "I have been moved on, and moved on ... and they're all a-watching and a-driving of me" (491). The brick-makers, similarly, have an itinerant existence, always "on the road" (492). Although they have homes, these are "wretched hovels" (129) in the brickfields, consisting of one "damp offensive room" (130): a symbol of impoverishment, not domesticity or stability. Tellingly, the brick-makers' mode of existence is recounted in Dickens's article "Tramps" (1860): "Bricklayers often tramp, in twos and threes, lying by night at their 'lodges,' which are scattered all over the country" (130). Finally, as a caveat, although Jo the crossing-sweeper is a vagrant, not all members of that "large class of the Metropolitan poor" (Mayhew 2: 465) were. Edward Albert, for example, who gives his testimony to Mayhew in "The Negro Crossing-Sweeper, who had lost both his legs," is recorded as living in a parlour, "scantily furnished" but with a "cheerful bit of fire" (2: 490). Similarly, Johnny, "The 'King' of the Tumbling-Boy Crossing-Sweepers," lives in his "grandmother's apartment" (2: 501). The point here is that the state of vagrancy, a situation upon which many of the Victorian poor were poised, is not specific to any "type" of poor person in particular.

In a letter to Mary Boyle Dickens writes, "the first shadows of a new story [are] hovering in a ghostly way about me" (*Letters* 6: 298). This is his first known reference to *Bleak House*, and the language that he uses to describe its advent is extremely apt. *Bleak House* is a novel shrouded in shadows and secrets. Even the illustrations that accompany *Bleak House* have a shadowy and depressive quality about them, and deliberately: Hablot Browne's novel use of dark plates pictorially portray "a new intensity of darkness" (Steig 131). The tenebrous tones of the text, seemingly present

from its conception, lead us to agree with Dickens's recent biographer, Claire Tomalin, that *Bleak House* marks a decided artistic shift in which the "high-spirited comedy of the early novels" (240) is replaced by something altogether more serious. This fits with the tenor of Dickens's life at the time of composition. During the 1850s Dickens applied himself to the social-crises of the day in both word and deed. In Dickens's weekly *Household Words*, established in 1850, he wrote and published articles on workhouses, ragged schools and, as we have seen, the homeless. He was also heavily involved in the day to day running of Urania Cottage, a refuge for "fallen women" supported by Angela Burdett Coutts. In addition to this, he was committed to improving education, sanitation and housing, and lobbied for their reform. All three of these preoccupations find themselves voiced in *Bleak House* in his depiction of Jo, the family of brick-makers, and Tom-All-Alone's, a near allegorical vision of a London slum.

"Jo the outlaw with the broom" (256) is wholly unimportant to the social world of *Bleak House*, but is at the same time absolutely essential to the plot of the novel. Its *dénouement* rests with other characters: Inspector Bucket and Tulkinghorn, for example, play important roles. However, Jo the vagrant, a nobody, plays a conspicuous part in setting the novel's resolution in motion. It is Jo who leads Lady Dedlock to Nemo's grave; it is Jo who inadvertently puts Tulkinghorn on her trail; it is Jo who infects Esther, which results in Lady Dedlock admitting that she is Esther's mother. Moreover, he also occupies a curiously large part of the text itself. Like the proverbial bad penny, Jo, no matter how many times the police move him on, keeps turning up — first in Crook's Court, then at Nemo's inquest, then in Tom-All-Alone's, in the Snagsbys's parlour, in Bleak House, and finally in George's Shooting Gallery. Indeed, with regard to his pervasiveness throughout the novel, Jo only comes a near second to Inspector Bucket, described by J. Hillis Miller as close "to being a human version of providence, omnipresent and omniscient" (174).

Jo's habit of appearing in unexpected places is a testament to his ubiquity throughout the novel. What is interesting, however, about Jo's appearances is that they never reveal anything more about Jo—he does not develop as a character. Initially this might not seem surprising. He is, after all, a seemingly minor character, one of the hundreds of such characters that teem through Dickens's *oeuvre*, creating the endlessly shuffling backdrop of people requisite for his cityscapes. Moreover, Dickens is famous (almost infamous) for creating minor or 'flat characters'. As E. M. Forster says, "Dickens's people are nearly all flat ... [n]early every one can be summed up in a sentence" (49). This is a description of Dickens's characterisation that still holds sway. Alex Woloch recently commented, "Dickens's panoply of eccentrics and grotesques brings minor characters to the center of his novels" (35). This prevalent "minorness," while perhaps implying inadequacy, is not a shortcoming in Dickens's work. As Forster goes on to note, "there is this wonderful feeling of human depth [in Dickens's flat characters]. Probably the immense vitality of Dickens causes his characters to vibrate a little" (49). And yet Jo does not possess an "immense vitality," he does not appear to "vibrate." He intrigues us certainly, Dickens had a talent for capturing the abject that borders on the repugnant, but if we try to picture the life beyond the broom, we will find ourselves in a dearth of the imagination. This is a difficulty not only for the reader, but also for the novel's third-person narrator who struggles to render Jo's private thoughts and feelings. In the midst of a description of that "ruinous place" (256) Tom-All-Alone's, the narrator declares:

It must be a strange state to be like Jo! To shuffle through the streets, unfamiliar with the shapes, and in utter darkness as to the meaning of those mysterious symbols, so abundant over the shops, and at the corners of streets, and on the doors, and in the windows! To see people read, and to see people write, and to see the postmen deliver letters, and not to have the least idea of language – to be to every scrap of it stone blind and dumb! It must be very puzzling to see the good company going to the churches on Sundays, with their books in their hands, and to think (for perhaps Jo *does* think, at odd times) what does it all mean, and if it means anything to anybody, how comes it that it means nothing to me? To be hustled, and jostled, and moved on; and really feel that it would appear to be perfectly true that I have no business, here, or there, or anywhere; and yet to be perplexed by the consideration that I *am* here somehow, too, and everybody overlooked me until I became the creature I am! It must be a strange state, not merely to be told that I am scarcely human (as in the case of my offering myself for a witness), but to feel it of my own knowledge all my life! To see the horses, dogs, and cattle, go by me, and to know that in ignorance I belong to them, and not to the superior beings in my shape, whose delicacy I offend! Jo's idea of a Criminal Trial, or a Judge, or a Bishop, or a Government, or that inestimable jewel to him (if only he knew it) the Constitution, should be strange! His whole material and immaterial life is wonderfully strange; his death, the strangest thing of all. (257-58)

This is a peculiar, fascinatingly strained description of Jo's supposed interior, atypical of Dickens's traditional style of characterisation. Written in long, convoluted sentences the narrator seems to imagine Jo's inner monologue to be something akin to a lawyer who is (almost comically) flabbergasted at the state of affairs in which he finds himself. The self-reflectiveness that Jo supposedly possesses and his use of evidence to support his claims, such as the parenthetical aside used to verify that he was told he's "scarcely human," contribute to the impression that Jo has a secretly scholastic mind. The tone of puzzlement with which Jo considers reading, writing and his own existence seem to presuppose a quizzical curiosity that is quite absent in all of his interactions. When Jo utters his familiar catchphrase, as he does immediately before this stream of conjecture begins, "*I don't know nothink*" (257), the narrator seems to suppose that an absence of knowledge necessarily leads to a desire for answers – moreover, to answers about abstractions, literacy and ontology, rather than more immediate and pragmatic problems, like his next meal. Indeed, we can hardly imagine a child, who is so hungry that he picks at his "bit of fur cap ... as if it were some mangy bird" (409) before "putting bits of fur in his mouth" (415), to be particularly curious about how or why he came into existence. As a result, the narrator's attempt to render Jo's private thoughts feels less like a convincing portrayal than a clumsy transposition of the narrator's own bourgeois concerns onto the vagrant crossing-sweeper.

This becomes remarkably apparent at the end of the passage quoted above when the narrator, abandoning the first person pronoun he initially adopted (which in itself seems a tacit admission of Jo's unreadability) begins to suppose how "strange" Jo's ideas must be. Here the narrator's bourgeois interests displace any sense that we had of Jo's interiority as he begins to consider those social and juridical elements of the British nation that are broadly thought to be authoritative and dignified. Indeed, even though these final sentences carry with them a scintilla of irony, conjured by the

hyperbolism of “inestimable jewel” and the parenthetical “if only he knew it,” the narrator, in composing his list, draws away from Jo and towards those mainstays of respectability and tradition that provide comfort and stability to the middle classes. The respectability evoked is enhanced by the capitalisation of the list’s objects, an orthographical choice suggestive of allegorical personification, that harnesses the dignity of institutions to the respectability of person, in a way that is reminiscent of Mr Merdle’s quasi-allegorical dinner guests Bar and Bishop in *Little Dorrit* (1855-57). Finally, there is something curious about the narrator’s repetition of “strange” at the close of the paragraph. Rhetorically it works to cultivate the reader’s interest in Jo’s thoughts, his existence, and his death (superlatively “the strangest”). However, even as it draws us closer to Jo it doesn’t really tell us anything about him: he remains as opaque as ever. The passage turns Jo, like the women outside Whitechapel workhouse, into an exhibit, a peculiarity.

Although the narrator’s attempt to make Jo sympathetic through a realistic presentation of his mind produces an unconvincing result, Dickens still makes Jo pitiable throughout the novel via his external characterisation. As a result of the narrator’s failed insight, however, Jo only appears as an exclusively “public” character, rather than an individual with any kind of private life. Unlike other minor characters, whose subjectivities are represented, though ultimately marginalised in the social world of the novel, Jo’s inner voice is inaccessible and apparently unimaginable (Woloch 137). The question is: why does Dickens choose to present Jo as so opaque, so ostensibly public?

*Bleak House* is a novel full of secrets. Secrets are by their very nature private and are therefore native to private spaces. The corollary of this is that when the reader is permitted access to – or knowledge of – these private spaces they often find a secret harboured within; this is certainly the case in this novel. We know that John Jarndyce’s cheery, paternal character has a depressive underbelly because he closets himself in The Growlery when “the wind’s in the East” (84). Similarly, we know that the eccentric Miss Flite’s Chancery hopes are mingled with something altogether unsettling when Krook, having conducted Esther into her chambers, divulges the dreadful names of her birds – “Hope, Joy, Youth, Peace, Rest, Life, Dust, Ashes, Waste, Want, Ruin...” (235). Private spaces, then, allow characters to both cultivate and conceal their private selves, which are in turn divulged to the reader. According to E. M. Forster this is one of the great pleasures of reading, while “we are people whose secret lives are invisible,” the characters in novels “are people whose secret lives are visible or might be visible” (44).

Jo, however, has no private space and consequently no secret life. He does have a place to sleep in Tom-All-Alone’s, but this shamolic series of squats is hardly private, hence Snagsby and Bucket feel no compunction about rooting him out in the middle of the night. Indeed, one of the defining characteristics of the vagrants in *Bleak House* is that they do not have access to private space. The family of vagrant brick-makers, who go “tramping high and low” (487) in search of work, have their home barged into twice during the novel. First by Mrs Pardiggle, who conducts herself, Ada and Esther into their hovel with a “great show of moral determination” (130) in the name of charity; and then by Esther herself who pushes the door open because it “stood ajar”—hardly surprising given the hut is “made of loose rough bricks” (876). Moreover, these types of intrusions are clearly ongoing given that one of the brick-makers tells Mrs Pardiggle, “I wants a end of these liberties took with my place” (132). Consequently, there is a sense within the novel that not only do vagrant characters not

necessarily possess private spaces, but also, from the point of view of middle-class characters, that they do not have the right to them.

Of course, private spaces do not need to be physical places; they can also be textual. The narrative that Esther writes, for example, is a private space in which she can express her interior self in a chronicle of feeling as well as events. Similarly, the love letters sent between Captain Hawdon and Lady Dedlock create a secret, textual space in which private feeling – damaging if made public – finds expression. Again, these types of spaces are unavailable to Jo who, as the narrator points out, is “stone blind and dumb” to all writing, as well as to the brick-makers, one of whom declares, “I an’t read the little book wot you [Mrs Pardiggle] left. There an’t nobody here as knows how to read it” (132). Consequently, Jo is a solely public entity; he has no recourse to writing or reading, certainly, but the implication is that he has no access to any private life of the mind. He is, for instance, unable to keep secrets (for where would he keep them?). Towards the end of the novel Inspector Bucket, performing a mad-dash attempt to track down a suicidal Lady Dedlock (with Esther’s help), divulges to Esther that Jo had to be moved on out of London because “[h]e had been making his tongue more free than welcome”; indeed, “there was no end to his tongue” (873).

Here Jo calls to mind Foucault’s “delinquent informers,” run amok. The delinquents are, like Jo, “the targets and auxiliaries of police supervisions” (282): they are harried by the law but form an important network of (perhaps unwitting) spies. Both of these roles are played by Jo during the course of the novel. He is repeatedly told to “move on” by the police and, albeit unknowingly, acts as an informant, revealing the whereabouts and actions of Lady Dedlock to Inspector Bucket and Tulkinghorn. The position of the delinquent in Foucault’s nineteenth-century, panoptic society is the same as that which Jo occupies within the world of the *Bleak House*. Both are entrapped in the public sphere and always within easy reach of the law. After all, Jo’s own whereabouts are revealed to Bucket by the other wretches of Tom-All-Alone’s: he is but one relay in a circuit of informants.

This paper has unearthed the causes of Jo’s opacity, but it is yet to excavate its intended effect. George Orwell wrote of Dickens, in his “criticism of society” there is an “utter lack of any constructive suggestion anywhere in his work” (37). This may well be true, however, although there is an absence of posited alternatives, Dickens does present us with the consequences of social injustice. While writing *Bleak House* Dickens campaigned for better housing and better education for the poor. What he reveals through his depiction of Jo is the consequence of those amenities not being available: a wide and unsurpassable gulf between the respectable public and its poorest members. Indeed, without proper education and housing (without, in other words, access to those private physical and textual spaces), the worst off in society lose all subjectivity and become objects who are all surface and no substance, who have been allowed to degenerate to a point where they, as the narrator says of Jo, are “of no order and no place; neither of the beasts, nor of humanity” (724). It is this process of degeneration that alienates Jo from the narrator, frustrating any pretence of narrative omniscience. This, in turn, creates the insuperable “iron barrier, which could not be removed” (133) that Esther feels lies between herself and the family of brick-makers earlier on in the novel.

Jo’s opacity, his impenetrability, is a symptom of his dehumanised condition, a testament to the fact that he is merely a biological body, bereft of a mind capable of logical reasoning and spiritual complexity. This is a message he tirelessly transmits throughout the novel: ““I don’t know nothink”. It



is because of this that he belongs “in ignorance,” as the third person narrator says, to “the horses, dogs, and cattle” (258). This animalised perception of vagrants was common in the nineteenth century and is expressive of the cultural attitudes of the Victorian period. Edwin Chadwick, in his *Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain* (1842), inserts an eye-witness account of the behaviour of London chiffonniers, “an idle, dissolute class” (96) of rag-pickers: “they reveled in the filth which is grateful to dogs, and other low animals” (95). Similarly, in the first volume of *London Labour and the London Poor*, Mayhew, discussing the vagrant “tribes” of Britain, theorises that they have “a greater development of the animal than of the intellectual or moral nature of man” (1: 1-2).

However, what is interesting about Dickens’s presentation of Jo’s dehumanised state, compared to Chadwick’s and Mayhew’s depictions of vagrants, is that where they see the animal aspect of the outcast as what separates the vagrant from the respectable public, Dickens portrays the biological body, the animal element of man, as a point of contact, a common, and potentially deadly, denominator. By allowing Jo to be an amoral fever-bearer within the novel, infectious to both Charley and Esther, Dickens emphasises the corporeal frailty that is shared by all members of society. The point that Dickens makes is that if we do not raise these wretches up, then they will be sure to bring us down, no matter how moral we are. If we cannot be united in common humanity, then we will be united in common *animality*. Indeed, Dickens indicates as much through the narrator’s vituperative speech on Tom-All-Alone’s:

There is not a drop of Tom's corrupted blood but propagates infection and contagion somewhere. It shall pollute, this very night, the choice stream (in which chemists on analysis would find the genuine nobility) of a Norman house, and his Grace shall not be able to say nay to the infamous alliance. There is not an atom of Tom's slime, not a cubic inch of any pestilential gas in which he lives, not one obscenity or degradation about him, not an ignorance, not a wickedness, not a brutality of his committing, but shall work its retribution through every order of society up to the proudest of the proud and to the highest of the high. (710)

Dickens, here, depicts society as a single human body in which the corruptive elements, allowed to permeate through the slums of London, become a blood-borne disease that courses through even the “choice stream” of the aristocracy. In its rhetorical absolutism and scientific exactitude (“not an atom,” “not a cubic inch”) this speech presents an apocalyptic vision in which “every order of society” is equally susceptible to infection. Despite the homiletic phrasing, with the fevered listing and stacked superlatives (“proudest,” “highest”) bringing the speech to an almost evangelical pitch, it is not God who wreaks vengeance, but man. Retribution is not unleashed because of immorality, but because of universal, unavoidable corporeality.

The character of Jo, then, overtly public in his construction and denied access to interior life and spirituality, illustrates the degenerative, animalising consequences of poor housing and educational provision, and also highlights that the cost of those inadequacies are not just borne by the luckless individual, but by the nation as a whole. This *Weltanschauung* is demonstrated elsewhere in Dickens’s work. In his article “A Small Star in the East” (1860) Dickens, while contemplating a slum, a “mud-desert” (240) very much like Tom-All-Alone’s, voices his hope that the “oncoming generations”

of the poor might be saved from poverty, “thereby changing ever-growing national weakness into strength” (240). As in *Bleak House*, “degeneracy, physical and moral,” which is exhibited by Jo and the brick-makers, is pinpointed here as a danger that is both posed, and exposed, to the public (“Small Star” 240).

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### Author Biography

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Alistair Robinson is a first-year PhD candidate at UCL where he is researching vagrancy and social exploration, 1834 to 1914. Other research interests include: Victorian and Edwardian studies, Modernism, the realist novel, Biopolitics and nineteenth-century magazine culture.